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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a conceptual framework of teachers' practical knowledge. The researcher examined interview data from 29 Finnish elementary school teachers to identify common features underlying teachers' practical knowledge. The interviews examined teachers' teaching and students' learning activities, social relationships within the profession, and teachers' professional selves. The empirical findings indicated that teachers shared some common epistemological stances guiding their practical ways of knowing. These stances were investigated and identified according to ways of being (nonscholastic stance) and ways of acting (organizational stance). This paper brings these two stances in teachers' practical knowledge together. It argues that the stances have the potential to combine vocational and professional aspects by establishing alternative epistemologies in teachers' practical knowledge. The results indicate that teaching can be seen both as a vocation with deep personal commitment and as a profession with procedural reasonings. For effective teaching, both aspects should be brought together. (Contains 66 references.) (SM)

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HOW TEACHERS KNOW AND KNOW ABOUT OTHERS?

An epistemological stance towards pupils

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HOW TEACHERS KNOW AND KNOW ABOUT OTHERS?
An epistemological stance towards pupils

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ABSTRACT How teachers get to know the demands of their work is a peculiar but genuine form of practical knowing. Given the way teachers develop and conduct their daily teaching in their classrooms, it is a fundamental part of their professional competency. It is represented in teachers' ways of working and their ways of talking about their work. Yet this knowing is seldom investigated for how it serves to justify teachers' practical knowing and their reported actions in the classroom.

This article presents a conceptual framework of teachers' practical knowing. Through consideration of interview data of 29 elementary school teachers, the common features underlying teachers' practical knowing were identified. The empirical findings indicated that teachers shared some common epistemological stances guiding their practical ways of knowing. These stances were investigated and identified both in cases of ways of being (nonscholastic stance) and ways of acting (organizational stance). In this paper these two stances in teachers' practical knowing are brought together. It is argued that the stances have the potential of combining vocational and professional aspects by establishing alternative epistemologies in teachers' practical knowing.

HOW TEACHERS KNOW AND KNOW ABOUT OTHERS?
An epistemological stance towards pupils

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Introduction

A widely accepted explanation of the practice of teaching is that it requires an understanding of specific cases and unique situations. According to such a view, this practical know-how is mostly built up by teachers in the field as they cope with the daily challenges of teaching and as they attempt to develop their professional practice. It is derived largely from their own experiences and interpretations and it is mainly formulated in concrete and context-related terms. In the field of teacher knowledge it has been referred to as e.g. craft knowledge (Leinhart, 1990; Grimmet & MacKinnon, 1992), practical knowledge (Elbaz, 1983; Johnson, 1984), personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1985) and as the professional knowledge landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Practical knowledge emphasizes its experiential origins (Handal & Lauvas, 1987) and implicit nature (Wagner & Sternberg, 1985; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Freeman, 1991) and it tends to build up in teachers' minds. This stance considers a teacher's knowledge not as a property of formal propositions but instead as a property of a mind constantly relating to action. Yet this practical knowing is seldom investigated for how it serves to justify teachers' reported actions in the classroom. As Scheffler (1958, p. 462) has noted, in our ordinary discussions we do not limit justifiability only to our intentional and controllable acts. Instead, we tend to 'talk around' the social practice of teaching (cf. Gee, 1992). Consequently, there is much to be learned about how and what kind of justifications are presented in, and can be interpreted from, teachers' practical knowledge.

Stich (1990) has critized philosophers for holding epistemological expectations that are simply unattainable, blaming us for using faulty reasoning that can really only be shown to be faulty through distanced, ex post facto, reflective analysis. Instead, Stich suggests that we should adopt a naturalized epistemology, in which we move away from blaming people for being unable to meet analytic epistemic standards and move towards appreciating the variety of human reason (cf. McCadden, 1998). Eisner (1998) encourages us to take a stand for alternative epistemologies due to the paradigm shift in which "information has given way in many quarters to the concept of meaning" (p. 34).

Educational researchers are increasingly interested in understanding the ways in which pupils and teachers make sense out of the world. As Esiner (1998) warns us, even epistemology as a concept might be too severe because "'[e]pistemology' in Greek philosophy refers to true and certain knowledge. Phronesis, wise practical judgement, is being seen increasingly as a more reasonable orientation to the ways in which human action can be studied and revealed" (p. 34, italics supplied).

The nature of practical knowing

Dewey (1931) rejected any conception of the mind that regards mind as isolated from persons and things. According to him, "Mind is primarily a verb. It denotes all the ways in which we deal consciously and expressly with situations in which we find ourselves" (Dewey, 1931, p. 263). As Greene (1994, p. 435) argues, this stance leads to "viewing knowing primarily as a [personal] search for the meaning of things with respect to acts performed and with respect to the consequences of those acts when performed". Thus, knowing is what is obtained by acting to resolve practical situations. As such

> "...[knowing is not] independent of who and what one is as a person. It is, instead, an organic property of being human, of acting in thoughtful and discerning ways. ... to know is a form of competence, an ability to navigate the puzzlements and predicaments of life with moral and intellectual surefootedness ..." (Fenstermacher & Sanger, 1998, p. 471).

Practical knowing must work for the person in such a way that it secures a method for action. In the case of teachers, practical knowledge seems to offer their holders guidelines as to what will probably be regarded most useful and effective in the particular contexts in which teachers are working. As Marland (1998, p. 15) notes, its utility is reflected in teachers' professional attitude: teachers place little faith in researchers and the research enterprise for knowledge about how to teach. Instead, they draw heavily on their practical know-how. Handal & Lauvas (1987) argue that it is the strongest determining factor in teachers' educational practice: "... [it is] a person's private, integrated but ever changing system of knowledge, experience and values which is relevant to teaching practice at any particular time" (p. 9). Sanders and McCutcheon (1987) speak about "... conceptual structures and visions that provide teachers with reasons for acting as they do ... " (p. 52).

This thrust to practice originates from the nature of the practical problems in teachers' work. As Schwab (1971) emphasized, a vast majority of educational problems cannot be solved procedurally by applying a uniquely suitable formula or technique. Instead, solutions to them must be found by an interactive consideration of means and

ends. The process through which this is achieved is called "practical reasoning" (Carlgren & Lindblad, 1991; Pendlebury 1993) and "deliberation" (Johnston, 1993). It shows that the problems teachers face in their work relate most closely to the class of questions that are referred to as "uncertain practical questions" (Gauthier, 1963). Teachers face them constantly: "How should I react to a pupil who is disturbing the class?", "How to evaluate pupils in an appropriate manner?" and so on. According to Reid (1979, p. 188-9), they are problems of great personal and public importance that have the same character and many features in common:

• They are questions that have to be answered - even if the answer is to decide to do nothing.

• The grounds on which decisions should be made are uncertain. Nothing can tell us infallibly which method should be used, what evidence should be taken into account or rejected, what kinds of arguments should be given precedence.

• In answering practical questions, we always have to take the existing state of affairs into account. We are never free from past or present contexts and their arrangements.

• Each question/problem is in some ways unique, belonging to a specific time and context, the particulars of which we can never exhaustively describe.

• The question/problem will certainly compel us to choose between competing goals and values. We may choose a solution that aims to maximize the desired results across a range of students involved, but some will suffer at the expense of others.

• We can never predict the outcome of the particular solution we choose, still less know what the outcome would have been had we made a different choice.

Here one observes that practical problems present many kinds of complexity. As Gauthier (1963) remarked, "the sphere of the practical is necessarily the sphere of the uncertain" (p. 1). A practical problem is "a problem about what to do ... whose final solution is found only in doing something, in acting" (p. 49). As noted, practical problems are the kinds of problems teachers face all the time, and in fact, teachers are quite good at solving them, or at least learn to live with them (Lampert, 1985).

From the research perspective teachers have learned to live with a "lesser form of knowledge" [and knowing] (cf. Labaree, 1998). Academic teacher research and field-working teachers still seem like two solitudes that do not meet (Coulter, 1999). Both parties lack a kind of dialogue from which they would profit. Zeichner (1995) makes this point by stating that:

> "[D]espite isolated examples of instances where teacher research and academic research have crossed the borders that divide them, they have essentially been

irrelevant to each other. For the most part, educational researchers ignore teachers and teachers ignore researchers right back." (p. 154)

Zeichner describes the various factors that keep the two communities separate and provides examples of how they might be brought together. His analysis focuses on the generation of the appropriate knowledge necessary for the profitable dialogue. Coulter (1999), however, takes another stance and proposes a shift from the generation of knowledge to a conderation of the justification of what counts as appropriate and useful knowledge.

The justification of practical knowing

The fact that practical knowing has many faces, each of which has its proper contexts, does not relieve it from the burden of justification. Fenstermacher (1994, p. 28) argues that justification is as central to practical knowledge claims as it is to the procedures of formal knowledge. But even if the interest is similar, practical knowledge and formal knowledge are different undertakings, depending on the domain in which one stakes one's claim. What distinguishes the process of justification in the practical domain as opposed to one in the formal domain is that the exact methods of science are not usually required. Nevertheless, practical knowledge also requires some features of justification or warrant in order to be labelled as knowledge and knowing. As Dewey (1899/1972) noted, practical knowledge refers to those specific, regular features which enable teachers to deal effectively with practice. The practice of teaching in schools and classrooms is determined in the discourse community within which teachers make their knowledge claims. Fenstermacher & Sanger (1998, p. 477) emphasize that it is imperative to understand that the practical quality of teachers' knowing does not relieve us of the requirement for some sort of justification. It merely alters the character of the justifications.

The traditional and propositional view of knowledge requires that to know x, one must have a justified, true belief that x is so. Is there a parallel to such conditions regarding practical knowing? Apparently not, because the process of practical knowing "can scarcely be appraised as either true or false; for it is not clear what the basis of the assessment would be, or what kind of evidence should be decisive" (Hampshire, 1959, p. 167). However, Carr (1981) has taken up the challenge of providing a basis of assessment for practical knowledge situations. He proposes three conditions (similar to the justified, true belief conditions of propositional knowledge). Following his argumentative reasoning, for one to know how to do teaching, one must

- entertain teaching as a purpose,

• be acquainted with a set of practical procedures for successful teaching, and

• exhibit recognizable success at teaching. (Carr, 1981, p. 58).

Entertaining teaching presupposes expressions of deliberative purposes, intentionality. Being acquainted with a set of practical procedures for successful teaching is a vital condition for practical knowing, but the final condition involves exhibiting recognizable success at teaching. This condition is analogous to the truth condition of a propositional knowledge claim. However, in the case of the practical knowledge of teaching, what one knows how to do is not a proposition but an action and thus can be neither true nor false. Therefore, in the case of practical knowing, the concept of satisfactoriness should be regarded as the validating principle. "Practical knowledge seeks satisfactory ways to adapt the world to often complex human purposes" ... [and practical reasoning] ... "is concerned with making truth rather than discovering it" (Carr, 1981, p. 60, italics supplied).

Practical knowledge must work for the person in such a way that it secures a method for action. Haak (1996) emphasizes that this "knowing is not isolated from practice but is itself a kind of practice - to be judged, like other practices, by its purposive success rather than by some supposed standard of accuracy of reflection of its objects" (p. 652). Thus, knowledge is obtained by facing and acting to resolve indeterminate situations by using workable methods and techniques. Knowledge must work for the person in a way that empowers the person. Practical knowledge "embraces this pragmatic orientation towards action" (Fenstermacher & Sanger, 1998, p. 471).

This orientation is a certain mental state. Aristotle spoke in his Nicomachean Ethics (VI 5a 30) of "practical wisdom" which he described as a "reasoned state". According to Anscombe (1957), this reasoned state is "a certain sort of general capacity in a particular field" (p. 88). With the help of this capacity, teachers are able to perform in their profession. Within this capacity Feldman (1997) speaks of varieties of wisdom.

• Wisdom of practice (Shulman 1987) consists of knowledge in the form of propositional statements that are derived from the practice. It shows the techniques that the teacher uses in his/her classroom: i.e how to start lessons, how to activate pupils in their learning, how to deal with problems of disturbance etec. The stance focuses on what it is that teachers need to know in order to teach successfully. Wisdom of practice can be codified as a basic tool kit (knowledge base) for teaching. Although wisdom of practice may not be explicitly stated, it is evident that acts are being justified on the basis of some rules. It is not supposed that the rules are unique or superior to alternative rules, they vary according to varying practices and contexts. In this sense they are relative. According to

Scheffler (1958), "[m]uch of our conduct falls within the range of less well-defined rules, or social practices and traditions" (p. 464).

It is very demanding to work with persistent problems that present severe uncertainty (Jackson, 1968; Fuller & Brown, 1975; McCadden, 1998). Therefore, within the realm of teachers' practical knowing there exists a tendency to treat some uncertain problems as procedural problems by establishing a formula or method of doing things. Pressures for the implementation of a procedural approach to the uncertain problems become especially strong when practical problems are persistent. Teaching is a very difficult task and the real-time constraints on teachers articulate a professional need to organize it some way.

• Wisdom in practice is constituted by a teacher's acting in his/her role of a teacher - "coming to understand what it means for [him/] her to be a teacher and to teach - through being a teacher in that situation" (Feldman, 1997, p. 769). The stance comes about through teachers, as human beings, interacting with educational situations. They often deal with the most important aspects of life - our 'selves', social relations and individual choices. References to these are often of an implicit nature in the form of (even vague) beliefs, stories, hunches etc. In this sense, they are quite general by nature (cf. Scheffler, 1958). Gauthier (1963) speaks about "uncertain practical problems" that can be subdivided into prudential and moral problems. Uncertain reasoning, he suggests, "may be considered to be that part of practical reasoning in which the reasons for acting are restricted to the wants, desires, needs and aims of the agent" (p. 24). Consequently, any problem whose solution will affect the wants, desires, needs and aims of others has moral aspects.

The preceeding discussion enables us to create a framework to deal with different ways to justify teachers' practical knowing. In Figure 1, the process of justification is described by using the concepts wisdom of practice and wisdom in practice (cf. Feldman 1997) together with the notions of procedural and uncertain ways of knowing (cf. Gauthier 1963).

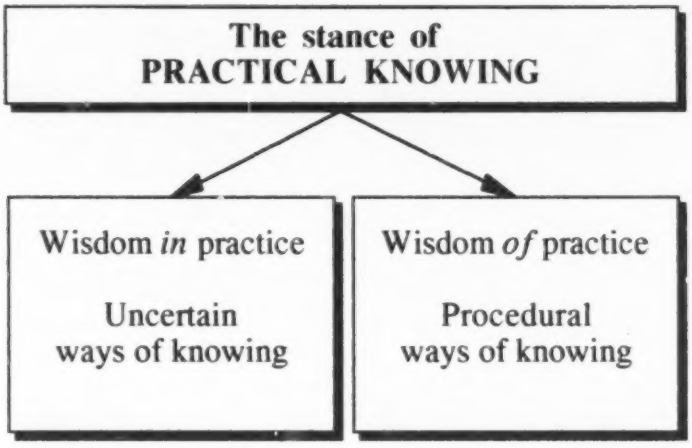

Figure 1. Two ways to justify teachers' practical knowing

This presentation of different qualities of practical knowing does not claim that every aspect of teachers' knowing can be slotted into one or another of these categories. The boundaries between the categories are often obscure and in many cases the categories are interrelated (cf. Hollingsworth, Dybdahl & Minarik, 1995). As Feldman (1997) emphasizes, good practice of teaching - as well as good interpretation of teaching - entails various ways of knowing. Each of them is a "way of knowing the world, of understanding educational situations, and of generating knowledge, coming to understand, or making meaning" (p. 770). Some of these ways of knowing are more generalizable and codifiable than others, some are deeply embedded in teachers' being in educational situations (cf. Husu, 1998).

Research area and tasks

So far, our analysis has shown that teachers' practical knowing is mainly formulated in concrete and context-related terms. It deals with teachers' lived experiences (van Manen, 1990), and its statements are essentially perceptual rather than conceptual. According to Kessels & Korthagen (1996), statements concerning perceptions and possible actions tend to be loose and indefinite by nature. In Nicomachean Ethics (VI, 1103b-1104a), Aristotle views this kind of knowing as phronesis, according to which "[e]very statement concerning matters of practice ought to be said in outline and not with precision ..." because "... statements should be demanded in a way appropriate to the matter at hand". And in practice, the matter at hand in educational situations tends to be imprecise by nature. Teachers' thinking is usually related to practical cases and situations, events they have encountered in practice, and they are not usually called on to justify their actions in

specific terms (Scheffler, 1958). Therefore, their justifications are often of an implicit nature.

However, the perception we are now talking about is not just normal sensory perception. Phronesis deals with more than meets the eye. It is a sort of capacity that is developed through being and acting in educational situations. The way teachers perceive their practice recasts their knowing from formal reasoning and reflection upon action to a complex set of ways of thinking about what it means to be a teacher (Jackson, 1968, 1986; Jackson, Boostrom & Hansen, 1993; Hansen, 1995; Nias, 1989). When knowledge is viewed from the perspective of phronesis, we need to define teachers' knowing substantially in terms of their personal experiences and their reported deeds and results.

The "knowing how" situations of practical knowledge do not always lend themselves easily to verbal articulation. However, this is not to imply that practical knowledge is devoid of conceptual content. Ross (1988) has elaborated the employment of concepts in practical thinking. According to him, even if the agent may be unable to express his activities in verbal concepts, " ... he employs them in the judgements he renders and the decisions he makes. The thoughts that guide and direct his actions are conceptual in nature even if they cannot be stated propositionally; these practical concepts are manifested in intentional actions" (p. 24).

Therefore, we need descriptions and interpretations that are adequate enough to reveal the structures of the experiential meanings which teachers report. As a result, if we succeed, we will get a description or interpretation that we can acknowledge. We can recognize it as a kind of description or interpretation that helps us to understand the thoughts and experiences of others, as well as our own. van Manen (1990, p. 27) speaks of the 'phenomenological nod' which means that a good description or interpretation is collected by lived experience, and helps to recollect lived experience.

In general, this paper aims at

- identifying teachers' practical ways of knowing.

In particular, it focuses on

- developing descriptive and interpretative categories within which teachers relate to their pupils.

Method of the study

The method of the study (Husu, 1995 & 1999) is a narrative interview (Mishler, 1986, pp. 75-87; Cortazzi, 1993, pp. 55-6). The aim is to get as accurate and authentic as possible a picture of justifications underlying teachers' interactive ways of knowing their

pupils. According to Connelly & Clandinin (1990), the study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world. It allows teachers' 'voices' (Goodson, 1992; Clandinin, 1992) to be heard and it emphasizes the need for teachers to talk about their experiences and perspectives on teaching in their own words. Cortazzi (1993) argues that a "teacher's voice may emerge at its strongest in teachers' narrative accounts" (p. 11). Grumet (1990) gives narrative a major role because in narrative interviews teachers are guided to tell their story "as a speech act that involves the social, cultural and political relations in and to which we speak" (p. 281). The study of teachers' narratives is also potentially a study of their own interpretations of their situation, i.e. their practical theories (Marland, 1998, pp. 16-9).

The narrative interview focused on the professional character of the teachers' work. The concept of professional character was used as a description of practice. It describes the manner of conduct within an occupation, how its members integrate their obligations with their knowledge and skills. The narrative interview of professional character consisted of three related themes: 1) themes of teachers' teaching and students' learning activities; 2) themes of social relationships within the profession; and 3) themes of teachers' professional 'selves'. The first theme of teaching and learning aimed at explaining how teachers had organized teaching in their classrooms, what kind of student activity teachers preferred and for what reasons. The way teachers perceived their students in general, how they talked about them, was also equally important. The second theme of social relationships focused on collegial relations and relations with parents and the surrounding local community, how teachers shared with their colleagues the tasks of teaching in their schools. Our inquiry focused on the prevailing school culture, how it supported or hindered teachers' professional tasks. The third theme of our narrative interview aimed at looking into the connection between the teachers' views of themselves and their ideas about teaching in general. We aimed at investigating how teachers' teaching activities were related to their personal values, how teachers perceived themselves as translators of personal values into specific behaviors in their classrooms.

Twenty nine elementary school teachers (20 females/9 males) in the capital area of Helsinki were interviewed. The interviews took 1.5-2 hours per teacher and were conducted by the author. The data is rich and diverse and in many cases it resembles a sort of authentic conversation between the teacher and the researcher. After each interview had been carried out the interviewer noted the location and the extent to which the respondent was interested in the themes. A great majority of the respondents were 'typed' with positive features (i.e. 'very interested') as well as positive attitudes ('cordial, warm, open').

An analysis of the data

All the interviews were recorded and later transcribed. All the materials were translated from Finnish into English with the help of a native English speaker. The qualitative analysis was a four-fold process:

• Summarizing and organizing the data: the data were coded and analytical notes were written in order to find linkages to various frameworks of interpretation. Tentative coding categories were tried out in order to find a set that was suitable.

• Reorganizing and aggregating the data: searching for relationships in the data and finding out where the emphasis and gaps in the data were. Identifying major themes in the data.

• Developing and testing concepts to construct an explanatory framework: testing various interpretative concepts and reducing the bulk of the data for analysis.

• Finally, the data were integrated into the explanatory framework.

It turned out, as Bruner (1996) has argued, that the narrative construal of the data was surprisingly difficult to examine and present - but in a rather unique way. As Bruner notes, the dilemma comes from the fact that "narrative realities are too ubiquitous, their construction too habitual or automatic to be accessible to easy inspection. ... [the problem is] how to become aware of what we easily do automatically" (p. 146). McCadden (1998, p. 77) has also noted that teachers' understanding of their doings in pedagogical situations seems wavering: teachers express concern that their pupils succeed in school and in other nonscholastic social arenas, but they tend to express their doings in their general language of behavioral appropriateness and classroom management. Teachers seem to "'talk around' social practices, and in the act mean" (Gee, 1992, p. 12). Therefore, the study of meanings is not only the study of heads; it is the study of social practices and cultural models that imply teachers' acts and thoughts.

Ways of being in practice - the nonscholastic stance

Being themselves

In our data, when teachers talked about instances of their practice, they were talking about themselves. Events seemed to be filtered through the person of the teacher. Teachers used themselves as tools to manage both the problems and the possibilities of their work. To a great extent teacher talk contained self-referential comments. Throughout the data, aspects of the self repeatedly emerged as a central experience in the teachers' thinking, even though each 'self' was different.

The data show that these self-descriptive statements are often formulated in terms of the general beliefs and images that govern teachers' professional behaviour. These statements are often used to justify both the general approach to the teaching profession and the particular practices of teachers in their classrooms.

Teachers tend to justify their ideas and actions according to the possibilities of 'being themselves' in the classroom. Many saw little distinction between themselves at work and outside of it; as one said, "What happens to you outside school as a person can't be separated from what happens to you as a teacher in the classroom." Teachers often experienced the blurring of personal and professional boundaries as very satisfying. They felt a sense of unity with the school, particularly with their classes.

In the teachers' own descriptions of the standards of high professional morality, they often referred to the priority given to work. As one teacher said:

> "A teacher with a high professional morality will even go to a hospital or a prison to teach. He/she thinks that nobody else can do the job for him/her. The teacher thinks that he/she is not interchangeable and has something in himself or herself that is important and unique for the teaching profession." (Male, 14 years of teaching experience)

Teachers did not separate their own moral character and their professional persona from each other. Nash (1996) talks about the "thick" language of moral character and acknowledges the importance of feelings and intuitions in the decision-making process. In a moral dilemma related to sensitive matters, a female teacher made her final decision based on her intuition and feelings:

> "First I thought that it might be better not to ask this pupil a question, but then I felt that the pupil might find me ignorant if I did not ask her anything. This kind of sensitive matter might not belong to a teachers' work, but you cannot ignore such things if you work with pupils. I wanted to show the girl that I cared. I felt that she needed caring from me." (Female, 20 years of teaching experience)

Intersubjective selves

In the person of the teacher, pedagogical knowledge is justified according to the ideas that are meaningful to the teacher himself/herself. Claiming that those ideas are often intuitive by nature does not mean that they are unsound for the practice of teaching. Rather, the teachers present and justify pedagogical ideas in a way that is socially useful. Teachers have learned this 'language of practice' in classrooms and staff rooms together with their pupils and their peers. This indicates that teachers' knowledge is justified much in the same way as they experience the people and things with which they come in contact.

Accordingly, teachers' 'selves' in the processes of justification are inescapably social. The main basis for legitimating ideas and actions seems to be their value for the classroom. The experience that 'it works' seems to be the most important criterion for justifying ideas and actions in a teacher's personal agenda. The same teacher continued:

> "According to my own view, I see that I have progressed quite well and I am pleased with the situation. And now I am not talking only about myself. According to my experiences the pupils also feel the way I do ... During our discussions I have told my pupils that I can't go back to the old days and old ways of teaching and they have told me that neither can they."

The main basis for legitimating ideas and actions seems to be their value for the classroom. According to the teachers, the 'others' that matter the most are their pupils. Ultimately, the teacher's ideas and actions are justified by how well they work with pupils. However, it is not only a matter of formal teaching. Many teachers report that their personal agenda must help to "establish all in all a good relationship with the pupils".

They also stated that "a teacher must get co-operation from the pupils", and "teaching is a joint effort between you and them". Teachers' pedagogical ideas and actions were often justified by their experienced regard for teacher-pupil relationships.

One of the most often-used arguments in teachers' justifications for their actions in moral conflicts was the best interest of a child. In dilemmas that involved colleagues or parents, the teachers reported that they took the side of their pupils. In conflicts between pupils, the teachers advocated the rights of the weaker party. One teacher justified this decision in the following way:

> "But I think it was right to take the side of the weaker pupil. I thought that I am strong and I have to protect the weak. I also have more experience than some other teachers and I thought it is my responsibility as a strong person to protect the rights of weak pupils." (Female, 15 years of teaching experience)

Commitment and hopefulness

Many teachers felt that they were committed to their work. The notion of 'commitment' was obviously central to how teachers reasoned and justified their pedagogical ideas and actions. However, they did not use the concept of 'commitment' frequently in their talk. Rather, teachers reported the amount and quality of thought and energy they put into their work. One teacher said: "Now I have worked with these pupils for over five years and I am gradually starting to see where all my efforts are leading us. And it is quite akin to what I hoped for" (Female, 9 years of teaching experience). Teachers are not only

committed to their pupils. They also care about the improvement of their school and they strive to reach higher professional standards in their own work. When teachers talk about their pedagogical agenda, they seem to feel that their personal strivings serve as adequate justifications for their actions. Still, it looks as if their intuitive high hopes are often placed above the reasoned facts. One teacher explained, "I am not at all sure about the way I am teaching my class. Ultimately, I can only hope that it will bring some good results" (Male, 7 years of teaching experience).

The commitment to teach calls for hope. Often it requires placing personally relevant and optimistic beliefs above the facts. Zeuli and Buchmann (1988) call it a "triumph of hope" in teachers' thinking. According to them, as a basis for action, "the hope that pupils can learn and change must be upheld whenever test scores, the opinions of parents, or even the first hand experiences of the teacher may imply the contrary" (p. 142). The primacy of spontaneous feelings of hope over reasoned experiences is justified, not because they can fit with our data, but because teachers think that their hopes can create new and more desirable results in their pupils and in themselves, too. As one teacher said: "Even if you can't see the positive results, you must still hope for the best" (Female, 12 years of teaching experience).

This hopefulness plays a moral role in teachers' thinking. It can be seen in two ways: on the one hand, as a relatively passive willingness to wait and see how things turn out and, on the other hand, as a more active tendency to foster pupils' growth. About the former, one teacher said: "You must give your pupils and yourself as a teacher enough time to develop" (Male, 17 years of teaching experience). Another teacher commented on the latter: "[As a teacher] you just can't sit still and wait, you have to help your pupils [in their growth]" (Female. 8 years of teaching experience). Elbaz (1992) stresses that this hopefulness in teachers' thinking should not be interpreted merely as naive or sentimental. It rests not on teachers' idealized images of their work but often on a detailed perception of their pupils' life in their classrooms. Accordingly, teachers (hope to!) know more than they can say (even to themselves!).

Evidently, most of the teachers interviewed were themselves very committed. The teachers had some troubling thoughts about some of their pupils and their future. However, they were hopeful and wanted to do their teaching well, with an eye to their pupils' future.

Ways of acting in practice - the organizational stance

Rules and regulations of practice

In analyzing the organizational stance and to identify its structure, we are at first inclined to look for some straight reasonings that can be read in the data. One teacher stated:

> "When it is the question of my pupils' safety, I always prefer clear and clean-cut rules and guidelines on how to act in those situations. And that is because I have seen what can happen if you don't do it." (Female, 5 years of teaching experience)

The statement is direct and its content is simple: as a teacher you must protect your pupils from getting into accidents and getting injured. The teacher does this by giving "clear and clean-cut rules" to her pupils and ensures that her pupils act accordingly. In the case of safety issues, this is the most common rule of practice which teachers use. The reasoning here goes along a single line: if a teacher does not do her work properly, she might cause accidents and injuries to her pupils. Therefore, the single causal line in reasoning is included in the rule of practice: give clear and clean-cut rules and guidelines to your pupils.

The rule of practice is simply what the terms suggest: a brief, clearly formulated statement of what to do in a particular situation frequently encountered in practice (Elbaz, 1983, p. 132). In the case of a safety rule, the rule of practice can be applied to broader situations, but the rules of practice can also be highly specific, relating to how to deal with conflicts a teacher faces with a pupil, for instance. As one teacher reported:

> "I have one pupil who really gets on my nerves. He just can't sit still and wait his turn. He wants to be noticed immediately; he can't stand the fact that there are others in the classroom, too. What I have tried to practise with him is that he will get my attention after I have finished my instructions and the other pupils have made their comments on the subject at hand." (Female, 5 years of teaching experience)

Here, too, the reasoning goes along a single line: the pupil must wait his turn. Only then can he get attention from the teacher. In this case, the single causal line in the teacher's reasoning is included in the rule of practice: in the classroom, pupils must learn to wait their turn.

The data included an instance where there was a pupil whom the teacher described as "the weakest pupil in the class", who refused to go into a small group with a fat girl. He had said aloud: "I will not work with a person like that, I cannot learn anything with her." The teacher said that this kind of situation is very typical and repeats itself every single day. According to the teacher, pupils are cruel to each other and use very hurtful language in evaluating each other's appearance and skills. The teacher did not say anything at the

moment this episode happened, but she asked both pupils involved to stay after class. The teacher discussed the episode with these two pupils; however, they did not find any solution then. The teacher asked the pupils to come and talk to her the next day in the teachers' room before classes began. The teacher justified her rule of practice of involving herself in situations like this: "I think this is very important; always pay attention to these kinds of episodes and do not let them go unnoticed" (Female, 10 years of teaching practice).

According to Fenstermacher (1994, p. 44), justification can take place when reasoning may show that "an action is the reasonable thing to do, an obvious thing to do, or the only thing to do under the circumstances." Each of these is a contribution to the justification of a rule of practice. Notwithstanding, the evidence supporting the rules of practice must come from the practice of teaching itself. The rules are justified because they have proven their worth and have therefore been approved. Teachers think, both implicitly and explicitly, that their rules of practice work. And because they work, teachers act accordingly. Teachers are justified in reasoning that there is a connection between the rules of practice and their supposed or intended outcomes.

In all our cases, the rules and regulations of practice seemed to necessitate both thinking the practical matter through and acting according to the rules. The rules and regulations of practice were justified because they met the standards of the smooth practical action held by the teacher. However, teachers did not argue that their rules are unique and superior to some alternative rules held by other teachers. Since teachers and situations vary, the rules must vary, too.

In the organizational stance, rules and regulations of practice can be said to be socially constructed in that they emerge from years of experience in school settings. It is a way teachers have found to be effective in problematic situations. The real-time constraints on teachers articulate a professional need: a successful teacher is one who, among other things, acquires a strong organizational stance toward his/her professional tasks and duties. Generally, teacher needs to know what he/she wants to accomplish, what sort of pupils he/she wants to try to shape over the course of a certain period, and how one is going to go about working toward that. Rules and regulations set a strong organizational power to often chaotic practices in the classroom.

Principles of practice

The organizational stance also consists of more inclusive statements. One teacher commented:

> "I do not have a huge amount of pedagogical ideas guiding my work with my pupils. I'll try to be fair and honest towards every one of them; I try to guide them to do their work in an appropriate manner and so on ... but all this can happen only if they really like to come to school and your classroom. If you (as a teacher) have failed to create that sort of good mood among your pupils, then even a great many of your sincere efforts are useless. And as a teacher you must yourself act accordingly." (Male, 12 years of teaching experience)

Compared to the rules and regulations of practice, this statement is more comprehensive. Here, the reasoning does not follow one procedural technique, as was the case in the rules and regulations presented earlier. Instead of one formula, the statement now consists of multiple rules. We can identify at least three rules and regulations of practice: First, when the teacher states that he tries to "be fair and honest towards every one of them", he expresses his rule of justice; second, the comment "to guide them to do their work in an appropriate manner" refers to the rule of diligence; third, the rule of a moral example is exemplified in the expression "as a teacher you must yourself act accordingly". As presented earlier, each of these three rules of practice can be justified separately by its own external evidence. However, here the three rules of practice find their justification in the statement "all this can only happen if they (the pupils) really like to come to school and your classroom". This statement is more inclusive than the rules and it implies what the teacher should do and how it should be done in a given range of practical situations. The above three rules find their justification in this more general principle of "pupils' pleasure in attending."

This principle of pupils' pleasure in attending gives the teacher a good reason to act according to the three rules that are related to the principle. But the rules must be practised in a manner that accords itself with the pedagogical idea and the agenda of the principle. It is the practical principle of pupils' pleasure in attending that justifies the three rules. And vice versa, what finally makes sense for the teacher is that the rule of justice, the rule of diligence, and the rule of moral example are practised according to the principle of pupils' pleasure in attending.

The epistemological stance -
not a method but a manner of knowing

In looking for justifying evidence, we were not interested primarily in statements having an external form. Rather, we concentrated on determining how such statements operated in structuring teachers' ways of knowing. Our data indicated that teachers used two different kinds of justifications in structuring their thinking (Tirri, Husu & Kansanen, 1999). However, as presented above, practical knowing is an interrelated entity, a general capacity. As Anscombe (1948) emphasized, practical performance "has a special procedure or manner, not special antecedents" (p. 32). In order to present this entity, the conceptual frameworks of both teachers' uncertain reasonings (ways of being) together with their procedural reasonings (ways of acting) should be brought together. Figure 2 presents the combination:

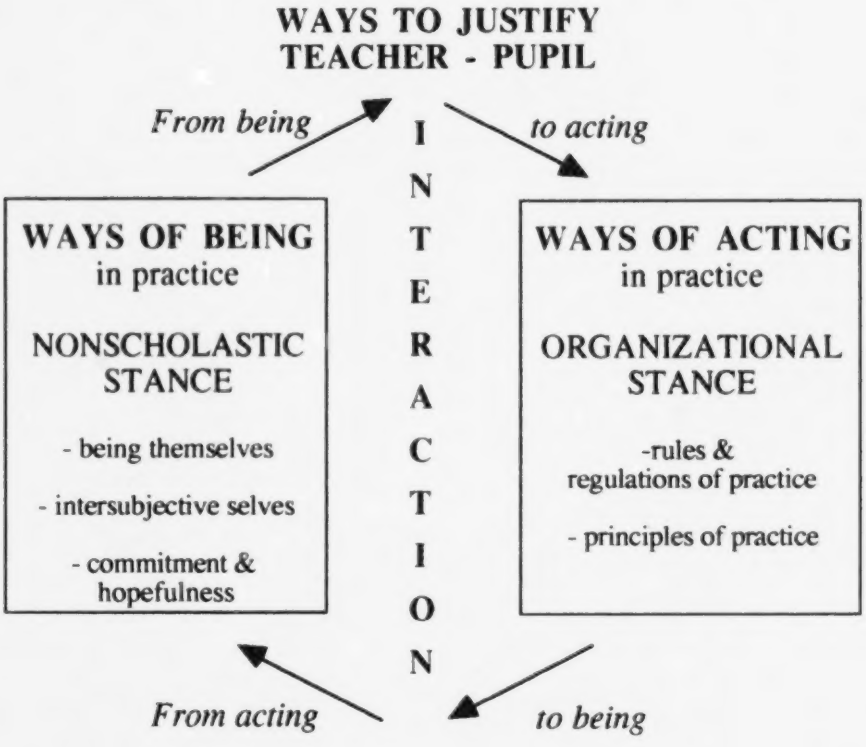

Figure 2. The relational epistemology of teachers' practical knowing.

As already noted, presentation of the conceptual framework does not claim that every aspect of teachers' ways of knowing can be slotted into one or another of a forementioned categories. The boundaries between the categories are often obscure and in many cases

the categories are interrelated. When the case of practical knowing is vaguely felt or of a complex nature and not easily translated into specific actions, we may be unsure where to place it. We may face descriptions which we can simultaneously place in two categories. But perhaps, as Reid (1979) wisely tells us, "the solution will come through shunting the problem back and forth, looking at it now in one light, now in another" (p. 191). In the beginning, some cases of teaching may be analyzed in a procedural fashion by studying the rules and principles on which they are probably based. This may lead us to some insights on how to interpret the practice of teaching (Kansanen, Tirri, Meri, Krokfors, Husu & Jyrhämä, 1999). In turn, these considerations can become the grounds for a process of uncertain reasonings about the losses and gains that are beyond the reach of procedural analysis.

The framework in Figure 2 presents a kind of rhetorical dualism (McCadden, 1998), neither ontological nor metaphysical dualism. It should be emphasized that the relational framework is used to represent a way in which we can think about things and perhaps learn from them, not to represent how things really are. The effort has been to elaborate two epistemological stances in teachers' practical knowing, concerning especially teachers' interactive knowing of pupils. Ways of being and ways of acting seem to exist in a symbiotic relationship, in effect needing each other. As MaCadden (1998) notes, rhetorical dualism thus needs to be understood as "intimating shades of difference and pointing out relationships between phenomena rather than polar oppositions " (p. 92).

Bearing this in mind, uncertain ways of being interact with teachers' more procedural ways of acting. As argued above, when teachers talked about their pupils, they simultaneously talked about themselves, too. The events relating to the pupils were filtered through the person of the teacher. Teachers used themselves as tools to manage their work with their pupils, and a large proportion of teacher talk contained self-referential comments. The aspects of self emerged quite implicitly, without much conscious thinking, in teachers' ways of knowing. Teachers' ways of being provided the overall context of thought and seemed to regulate the determination of more procedural reasonings.

This accords with Dewey's (1926/1984) notions concerning people's selective attention and its intuitive base. He maintained that our primary relation to reality is not cognitive. Rather, the experience of the situation, i.e. what is perceived from the contextual whole, is immediate. According to him, the word 'intuition' describes that "qualitativeness underlying all the details of explicit reasoning" (Dewey, 1926/1984, p. 249). This intuitive background may be relatively simple and unexpressed and yet

penetrating; it often underlies the definite ideas which form the basis for explicit reasons and justifications. However, it directs attention and thereby determines what is perceived. For example, hopefulness and commitment set a teacher's mind to seek 'weak signals' to prove that at least some learning and progress have taken place in their pupils. It often implies that some personally relevant and optimistic beliefs are placed above 'the reasoned facts' of explicit and formal reasoning. But without hopefulness and commitment, those 'weak signals' of learning and progress would not even be recognized. Therefore, the intuitive, uncertain aspects of teachers' practical knowing are crucially important: they justify and compel teachers to perceive their pupils with great care.

Summary and possibilities

Fenstermacher (1994, p. 3) reviewed conceptions of knowledge in published research on teaching. At the end of his review, he left readers with a challenge to show not only that teachers think, believe or have opinions, but also to investigate what teachers know, and especially, how they know. This paper attempts to tackle that epistemological challenge. But, instead of giving formal and direct solutions that lead to better teachers and teaching, its answers are expressed provisionally. Based on the findings, these answers depend on three features of teachers' practical knowing. First of all, teachers' practical knowing is characterized by the constant interplay of procedural and uncertain ways of knowing. Second, they depend on the ways knowledge is formed and expressed in the school contexts in which teachers work and live. The data and continuing conversations with teachers have reminded us of the immense complexity of the social contexts of teachers' ways of knowing. Third, they depend on the authority of the person. The ways of being presuppose that teachers' personal values and understandings are used as the standards to test the claims of knowing. In sum, and loosely interpreting Heidegger's (1962) ideas, teachers' being-in-the-pedagogical-world can be characterized as unexplicit and non-representational understanding that comes about through shared everyday skills and practices into which teachers have become socialized (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 4). This being-in-the-pedagogical-world that arises through this shared, social background seems to be the basis for teaching activity.

The findings of this study indicate that teaching can be seen both as a vocation with a deep personal commitment and as a profession with procedural reasonings. For effective teaching both aspects should be brought together. One aim in the discussion of teachers' practical knowing is to raise questions about the knowledge base of teaching and teacher education and how it translates into 'good practice' in classrooms. An important theme is that 'good practice' is an aspiration as much as an achievement, more a

dilemma than a certainty. As Alexander (1996, p. 71) put it: " ... good practice, created as it is in the unique setting of the classroom by the ideas and actions of teachers and pupils, can never be singular, fixed or absolute, a specification handed down or imposed above ... [It] is plural, provisional and dynamic: there are as many versions of good practice as there are good teachers striving to attain it". Therefore, 'good practice' is based on an individual teacher's reasoning and character. What is known and how the knowledge is justified are epistemological issues that are related to the person of the teacher.

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